

**Lake Champlain Basin Program
Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, September 21, 2010
Valcour Conference Center (SUNY), Peru, NY**

APPROVED Minutes

Members present: Betsy Lowe, Daniel Leblanc, Jonathan Wood, Gene Brickman, Gina Campoli, Buzz Hoerr, Marilyn Stephenson (for Aster Boozer), Erik Beck (via phone), Ron Jackson, Mary Watzin, Real Pelletier, Roseanne Murphy (via phone), Mario Paula [for Mario DelVicario) via phone]. **Staff:** Bill, Martin, Beth Card, Jim, Meg, Nicole, Eric, Fred. **Guests:** Bill Wellman, Chris Maron, Fred Woodard, John Zurlo, David Borthwick-Leslie, Julie Moore, Jane Gregware, Andrew Snell, Jen Thalhauser (via phone)

10:00AM **Meeting Begins** – Elizabeth Lowe, Chair

Draft Meeting Agenda review (no changes)

Action Item: Ron moved to approve the draft August 18, 2010 Steering Committee meeting minutes, Marilyn seconded the motion. Approval was unanimous.

Public Comments & Dialogue - none

Updates from Jurisdictions

- **VT-** Jonathan reported that in conjunction with NY, a series of lampricide treatments is underway. Project plans have been forwarded to ACOE for approval: the Allen Brook project, St Albans Bay project. The legal issues between EPA and Vermont remain unresolved. EPA will be taking a look at the VT portion of the 2002 TMDL within the next 180 days. The Agency is in the process of setting budget goals for SFY 2012 which will be another lean year.
- **QC** – Daniel reported no significant news since last meeting
- **NY** – Betsy reported that due to retirement attrition, NYSDEC losing 3 positions in water quality and several additional positions in Region 5. Betsy thanked Bill and Eric for informing NYSDEC executive staff in Albany on how the LCBP budget is distributed and about the decision process. New legislation restricting phosphorus for household use became effective 8/14/10. The new phosphorus in lawn fertilizer law will come into effect on 1/1/2012; it prohibits use of P on impervious surfaces and restricts use on residential lawns except for new lawns or where a P test shows it is needed. Spiney waterflea was confirmed in Sacandaga Lake. The Crown Point Bridge construction continues. Sand hill cranes were seen in the Basin recently.

Reports from Advisory Committee Chairs

VT CAC - Buzz reported the CAC is starting development of its annual action plan. CAC members attended the North Lake meeting in August and had a South Lake meeting last week. It is collecting information about issues around the basin and identifying the top 10 issues to include in the action plan. Jonathan thanked the CAC for all its work.

EO - Buzz described the recent *Don't P on the Lawn* effort and also the continuing *CBEI* program implemented by the LCBP.

QC CAC – Real reported on the recent annual meeting of the group, which included a visit from a parliament leader, who was impressed with all the work that is being done with VT, NY, and QC. He appreciated that Colleen participated in the meeting.

NY CAC – Ron reported on recent CAC meetings, noting that Colleen also participated. Saranac Lake coal tar remediation project is underway to remove contaminants and treat the water involved before releasing it. Several NY CAC members are attending today's Steering Committee meeting to see how the committee works.

CHRAC – No committee update, but related news

- Bill reported that, in accord with Steering Committee guidance, CHRAC has ended its role as an advisory committee to develop the CVNHP management plan. LCBP and NPS are in the final discussions of revisions regarding the draft plan, and the Steering Committee review this afternoon of specific actions should end our part of the plan development work. John Krueger, continuing as HAPAC chair, will provide a draft list of HAPAC nominations to the next Executive Committee meeting.
- Jim reported that on October 8th there will be a conference at St. Michael's college on the quadricentennial legacy program, to guide the development of an RFP for work to continue documenting that legacy. A new RFP for a quad legacy trail (\$11,000) will go out soon for 10 bilingual wayside exhibit signs about the war of 1812. Buzz noted that Malletts Bay was very busy this year and the local economy got a boost from the quad activities. Ron noted this also was true on the NY side of the lake. Most of the increase was Quebec visitors, as in Vermont.
- Jim discussed the 150 year anniversary of the Civil War next year, and Jim has been named to the VT Governor's Commission. Real asked about follow up to the Montreal meeting of last spring. Later this year there will be a meeting in Plattsburgh on how to commemorate 200 years of peace. Laura is updating the heritage database, as requested at the Montreal meeting. Also recommended at that meeting was that LCBP develop a cross-boundary Wine Trail –and the groundwork is being done now for that project.

Legislative Update – Bill reported, following a recent discussion with Tom Berry, on a number of earmarks and appropriations that Senator Leahy has requested and their stage in the subcommittees in the senate. Not much is happening right now due to elections. We probably will be seeing a continuing resolution for a while with a flurry of legislation between elections and the New Year. Gene recounted his recent positive conversations with Senator Gillibrand, regarding the work of the LCBP. Ron recounted that the VT CAC met recently with Congressman Owens, who lives on Cumberland Head and is very interested in Lake Champlain.

Manager's Report – Bill reported on the startup of several tasks with GLFC funds. We soon will release RFPs for 4 technical tasks, and already have released RFPs for \$840,000 in local grants, EO grants and organizational support grants. The South Lake agricultural RFP is also out and has a deadline of Oct 21st. Bill thanked Jonathan for identifying \$800,000 in non-federal match from VT ANR for this fiscal year, and thanked Bruce Hyde for VT Tourism and Marketing's \$240,000 identified match for NPS funds. We are working with NPS northeast office to get the CVNHP plan approved – there are a few obstacles and are working towards agreement on those. We have incorporated all actions from the CVNHP plan into the cultural chapter of *OFA*. The Federal Partners MOU is being recast to help in the implementation of *OFA*. All federal partners have agreed to sign on to the new MOU and Kip Potter (NRCS) is coordinating the wrap-up of this effort.

Opportunities for Action Draft Revision Review

Chapter 1: The Committee discussed the vision statement quoting management conference and made minor adjustments to better reflect the role of the Steering Committee.

Chapter 2: The *Strategy for Implementing the Plan* now includes an overview in French, and Monitoring is now a part of this chapter rather than its own chapter.

Chapter 3: *Informing and Involving the Public* is better connected to technical priorities and tasks.

Chapter 5: *Toxins* management has been restructured, maintaining emphasis on pollution prevention.

Chapter 6: *Fish Wildlife and Plants* adjustments from the last SC meeting were reviewed.

Chapter 7: *Aquatic Invasive Species* chapter needed no further review.

Chapter 8: *Climate Change* chapter was reviewed and small adjustments made to keep the emphasis on adaptive management and sustainable actions.

Chapter 9: *Cultural Heritage* actions are consistent with those in the draft CVNHP plan.

Chapter 10: *Economics* chapter was reviewed in some detail and priority actions and tasks reordered. Chapter language, in addition to planning listed tasks, is intended to make people more aware of what is involved in the valuation of ecological services and to recognize possibilities to both stimulate economy and help the lake.

Emerging Issues – Technical Advisory Committee – Breck Bowden participated via phone from Alaska, describing the September TAC meeting discussion of preliminary recommendations for FY11. Eric circulated a priority list of activities recommended by TAC. The TAC is now mapping specific tasks to the actions included in OFA and also inviting other interests in the technical and scientific community to make task suggestions. TAC September and October discussion included the following:

- **Phosphorus** TAC considered practices that would be effective and locations that need focus. Demonstration of effectiveness was a theme for both agricultural and rural areas BMPs and focused on existing stormwater infrastructure that now needs retrofitting to reduce phosphorus load. Blue green algae concerns continue and the role of nitrogen on algal blooms needs better understanding. TAC is discussing biofuel impacts and interactions with P reduction needs. TAC also sees a need for E&O to consider training for town managers and road crews on ditch maintenance to reduce phosphorus, and on transportation related BMPs in urban areas.
- **Toxic Reduction and management** – Everyone was concerned about next generation pharmaceuticals and felt the need for investigation of treatment methods in removing or reducing these pharmaceuticals.
- **ANS** – The main concern focused on the Champlain Canal and Chambly Canal, as vectors in need of monitoring.
- **Fish and Wildlife and Plants** – While nothing emerged as a top priority, TAC has discussed a broad array of biodiversity concerns, including the impact of alewives and the in-lake food web, lamprey management issues, littoral zone communities,
- **Economics** – TAC has a strong sense that better cost benefit assessments should be integrated into LCBP-funded projects: both implementation and research projects. A better use of ecological economics was a primary interest.
- **Climate Change** – TAC accorded a high priority to understanding the ecosystem effects of climate change on water temperature and Lake ice conditions, for example, that would affect plant growth, and the food web.
- **Implementation** – TAC discussed the need to understand the time-lag of responses in water quality to management practices, and considered this a high priority area for research.

Discussion of Emerging Issues, OFA priorities and specific interests for technical task budgeting for FY2011

The Steering Committee discussed these issues and the guidance to go back to the TAC on what are the high priorities. The Committee felt that continuing focus on long term monitoring well into the future and on the impact of phosphorus in the Lake ecosystem are high priorities. There also was a sense that economic cost benefit information should be a high priority, along with consideration of the cost of not doing anything. Climate change is more an issue than ever before, and management actions now must take this into account. The landscape is feeling a number of growing pressures and changing uses of agricultural land, such as for biofuel production are developing quickly. Wrapped around those questions of phosphorus, nitrogen and economics is the larger framework of change and what it means for the effort to manage the future condition of the Lake.

The Committee is interested in new efforts to determine what effect the work we have done is having on P load. The Missisquoi watershed is getting a heightened level of attention, monitoring and research concerning the flux of P in the Bay, and critical sources of P in the drainage basin. What is learned from the Missisquoi may be useful in helping other watersheds. The water balance is a priority and may clarify how we would have to alter load allocations, etc. in the lake and what needs to be adjusted. The faster LCBP moves on water budgeting and BMP effectiveness analysis, the better informed we will be about targeting new efforts. More information on both nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations and their importance to algae blooms is needed. LCBP funds should not go to in-lake issues as much as to support practices we are doing on the landscape, to reduce the nitrogen and sediment load from the land into the lake.

LCBP needs to invest in an economic study and should challenge TAC to make some recommendations toward that end. The program needs to start moving on climate change issues and many things could be done to adapt management to projected change. The LCBP-LCRC conference session on climate change made clear this issue is changing populations of both fish and plants and changing how fishery management will be done in future. Similarly, climate change is going to drive changes in our approach to stormwater and runoff management, so we need to identify how to approach these changes.

The Committee would like TAC to recommend how to better understand alewife and white perch population dynamics and the related food web and possible impacts on blue-green algae. Nonetheless, the focus of the LCBP should not be diverted away from plan implementation and into the broader arena of general research. Any research funded by LCBP should be to answer specific questions and to provide information about how best to target resources to clean up the Lake.

Other Business

The process of finalizing the signing date of OFA was discussed and all signatories were asked to hold the date of November 8th and 30th if possible, and the choice will be finalized soon. Gene responded to the Committee's desire for the Corps to make a presentation on economic analysis, noting that December 14th would work, but that other December dates would not. The 14 was tentative set as the next Steering Committee meeting date, to be in Vermont.

Action Item: *Dave moved to adjourn, Ron seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote*